

What is Claimed is:

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1. A system in which local advertisements are distributed to user television equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented, comprising:

means for distributing the local advertisements to the user television equipment; and
means for displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide.

2. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises means for transmitting the local advertisements from a television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

3. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises means for transmitting the local advertisements to a television distribution facility as part of a global data stream.

4. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises means for transmitting the local advertisements to a television distribution facility as part of a global data stream that contains global advertisements.

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5. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting the local advertisements to a television distribution facility as part of a global data stream; and

means for transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

6. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting a global data stream to a television distribution facility;

means for inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream at the television distribution facility; and

means for transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

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7. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting a global data stream containing global advertisements to a television distribution facility;

means for inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream at the television distribution facility; and

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means for transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

means for transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution

facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

10. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting a global data stream containing slots reserved for local advertisements to a television distribution facility;

means for inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream in the reserved slots at the television distribution facility; and

means for transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

11. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting a global data stream containing global advertisements and having bandwidth reserved for local advertisements to a television distribution facility;

means for inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream in the reserved bandwidth at the television distribution facility; and

means for transmitting the local advertisements and the global advertisements from the

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television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

12. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting a global data stream containing global advertisements to a television distribution facility;

means for transmitting the global data stream from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment; and

means for transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as a separate data stream from the global data stream.

13. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting global advertisements at a television distribution facility;

means for providing local advertisements to the television distribution facility; and

means for transmitting the global advertisements and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

14. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

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means for transmitting global advertisements and program guide information to a television distribution facility;

means for providing local advertisements at the television distribution facility; and

means for transmitting the program guide information, the global advertisements, and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

15. The system defined in claim 1 wherein program guide data and global advertisements are stored at a main facility, and wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting the program guide data and global advertisements from the main facility to a television distribution facility;

means for providing local advertisements at the television distribution facility; and

means for transmitting the program guide data, the global advertisements, and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

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16. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide further comprises:

means for displaying a global advertisement that may be selected by a user with the interactive television program guide; and

17. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide further comprises:

means for displaying a corresponding full-screen local advertisement whenever the user selects the global advertisement.

means for displaying global,
advertisements with the interactive television program
guide; and

19. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide further comprises:

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means for displaying global banner advertisements with the interactive television program guide; and

means for cycling the display of the global banner advertisements and the local advertisements.

20. The system defined in claim 1 further comprising means for displaying global advertisements with the interactive television program guide.

21. The system defined in claim 1 further comprising means for displaying a program listings region with the interactive television program guide.

22. The system defined in claim 1 further comprising:

means for displaying global advertisements with the interactive television program guide; and

means for displaying a program listings regions.

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23. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

means for transmitting global advertisements and program guide information to a television distribution facility;

means for providing local advertisements at the television distribution facility;
means for transmitting the program guide information,

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the global advertisements, and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment;

means for displaying the global advertisements with the interactive television program guide; and

means for displaying a program listings region containing the program guide information with the interactive television program guide.

24. A method for using a system in which local advertisements are distributed to user television equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented, comprising the steps of:

distributing the local advertisements to the user television equipment; and

displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide.

25. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the step of transmitting the local advertisements from a television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

26. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the step of transmitting the local advertisements to a television distribution facility as part of a global data stream.

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27. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the step of transmitting the local advertisements to a television distribution facility as part of a global data stream that contains global advertisements.

28. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the steps of:

transmitting the local advertisements to a television distribution facility as part of a global data stream; and

transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

29. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the steps of:

transmitting a global data stream to a television distribution facility;

inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream at the television distribution facility; and

transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

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transmitting a global data stream containing global advertisements to a television distribution facility;

inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream at the television distribution facility; and

transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

31. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the steps of:

transmitting a global data stream containing global advertisements to a television distribution facility;

inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream at the television distribution facility by overwriting the global advertisements; and

transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

32. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the steps of:

transmitting a global data stream containing bandwidth reserved for local advertisements to a television distribution facility;

inserting the local advertisements into the global data stream in the reserved bandwidth at the television distribution facility; and

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transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

transmitting the local advertisements and the global advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as part of the global data stream.

35. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises:

step of transmitting a global data stream containing global advertisements to a television distribution facility;

step of transmitting the global data stream from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment; and

step of transmitting the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment as a separate data stream from the global data stream.

36. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the steps of:

transmitting global advertisements to a television distribution facility;

providing local advertisements at the television distribution facility; and

transmitting the global advertisements and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

37. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the steps of:

transmitting global advertisements and program guide information to a television distribution facility;

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providing local advertisements at the television distribution facility; and
transmitting the program guide information, the global advertisements, and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

38. The method defined in claim 24 wherein program guide data and global advertisements are stored at a main facility, and wherein the step of distributing the local advertisements further comprises the steps of:

transmitting the program guide data and global advertisements from the main facility to a television distribution facility;

providing local advertisements at the television distribution facility; and

transmitting the program guide data, the global advertisements, and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment.

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39. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide further comprises the steps of:

displaying a global advertisement that may be selected by a user with the interactive television program guide; and

displaying a corresponding local advertisement with content related to the content of

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the global advertisement whenever the user selects the global advertisement.

40. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide further comprises the steps of:

displaying a global advertisement that may be selected by a user with the interactive television program guide; and

displaying a corresponding full-screen local advertisement whenever the user selects the global advertisement.

41. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide further comprises the steps of:

displaying global advertisements with the interactive television program guide; and
cycling the display of the global advertisements and the local advertisements.

42. The method defined in claim 24 wherein the step of displaying the local advertisements with the interactive television program guide further comprises the steps of:

displaying global banner advertisements with the interactive television program guide; and
cycling the display of the global banner advertisements and the local advertisements.

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44. The method defined in claim 24 further comprising step of displaying a program listings region with the interactive television program guide.

displaying global advertisements with
the interactive television program guide; and
displaying a program listings region
with the interactive television program guide.

transmitting global advertisements and
program guide information to a television distribution
facility;

transmitting the program guide information, the global advertisements, and the local advertisements from the television distribution facility to the user television equipment; displaying the global advertisements with the interactive television program guide; and

displaying a program listings region containing the program guide information with the interactive television program guide.

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means for distributing the advertisements to the user television equipment; and means for displaying only some of the advertisements on the user television equipment with the interactive television program guide based on the content of the advertisements.

48. The system defined in claim 47 further comprising means for providing the advertisements with content tags indicating the content of the advertisements.

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sub A² 49. The system defined in claim 47 further comprising:

means for providing the advertisements with content tags indicating the content of the advertisements; and

means for displaying only those advertisements with desired content tags.

50. The system defined in claim 47 further comprising means for selecting blocking criteria that are used to determine which of the advertisements are displayed.

52. The system defined in claim 47 further comprising means for blocking advertisements with undesired content tags.

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54. The system defined in claim 47 further comprising means for displaying a back-up advertisement in place of those advertisements that are not displayed based on their content.

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56. The method defined in claim 55 further comprising the step of providing the advertisements

with content tags indicating the content of the advertisements.

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57. The method defined in claim 55 further comprising the steps of:

providing the advertisements with content tags indicating the content of the advertisements; and

displaying only those advertisements with desired content tags.

58. The method defined in claim 55 further comprising the step of selecting blocking criteria that are used to determine which of the advertisements are displayed.

59. The method defined in claim 55 further comprising the step of distributing advertisements with content tags.

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60. The method defined in claim 55 further comprising the step of blocking advertisements with undesired content tags.

61. The method defined in claim 55 further comprising the step of displaying information in place of those advertisements that are not displayed based on their content.

62. The method defined in claim 55 further comprising the step of displaying a back-up

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advertisement in place of those advertisements that are not displayed based on their content.

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63. A system in which a television distribution facility is used to distribute advertisements to user television equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented, comprising:

means for distributing the advertisements to the television distribution facility;

means for time-shifting at least some of the advertisements with the television distribution facility; and

means for displaying the time-shifted advertisements with the interactive television program guide.

64. A method for using a system in which a television distribution facility is used to distribute advertisements to user television equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented, comprising the steps of:

distributing the advertisements to the television distribution facility;

time-shifting at least some of the advertisements with the television distribution facility; and

displaying the time-shifted advertisements with the interactive television program guide.

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65. A system in which a television distribution facility is used to distribute advertisements to user television equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented, comprising:

means for providing the advertisements with advertisement usage information; and

means for enforcing an advertisement usage policy at the television distribution facility based on the advertisement usage information.

66. The system defined in claim 65 wherein the means for providing the advertisements with advertisement usage information comprises means for providing the advertisements with usage policy flags at a main facility.

67. The system defined in claim 65 wherein the means for enforcing the advertisement usage policy comprises means for distributing and displaying the advertisements in accordance with policy flags.

68. The system defined in claim 65 wherein the means for providing the advertisements with advertisement usage information comprises means for distributing an advertisement usage policy message to the television distribution facility.

69. The system defined in claim 65 wherein the means for enforcing the advertisement usage policy comprises means for distributing and displaying the

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advertisements in accordance with an advertisement usage policy message.

70. A method for using a system in which a television distribution facility is used to distribute advertisements to user television equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented, comprising the steps of:

providing the advertisements with advertisement usage information; and
enforcing an advertisement usage policy at the television distribution facility based on the advertisement usage information.

71. The method defined in claim 70 wherein the step of providing the advertisements with advertisement usage information comprises the step of providing the advertisements with usage policy flags at a main facility.

72. The method defined in claim 70 wherein the step of enforcing the advertisement usage policy comprises the step of distributing and displaying the advertisements in accordance with policy flags.

73. The method defined in claim 70 wherein the step of providing the advertisements with advertisement usage information comprises the step of distributing an advertisement usage policy message to the television distribution facility.

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74. The method defined in claim 70 wherein the step of enforcing the advertisement usage policy comprises the step of distributing and displaying the advertisements in accordance with an advertisement usage policy message.

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